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Administrative and Legal Framework for Forest Protection in Ukraine

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Abstract

The article examines the administrative and legal framework for forest protection in Ukraine. It is noted that forests are important natural resources that support environmental stability, biodiversity conservation and climate balance on the planet. In the context of global climate change, increasing anthropogenic impact and intensive use of forest areas, the issue of their protection is becoming increasingly important. Forest protection includes a set of measures aimed at preserving and restoring forest ecosystems, preventing their degradation and ensuring sustainable management of forest resources. The article focuses on the important aspects of legal regulation of forest protection in Ukraine, analyses the current legislation and points out some aspects that need to be improved. The conclusions summarize the main points of the study and offer recommendations for improving the legal mechanisms for forest protection. In particular, it is noted that the current legislation of Ukraine on forest protection is comprehensive and covers various aspects, including environmental, economic and social. However, there is a need to improve the legislation to increase its effectiveness and adapt it to modern challenges. The main problems are insufficient clarity of legal norms, lack of effective mechanisms for monitoring compliance with legal requirements, and poor integration of environmental standards into forest management practices. In addition, the need to ensure proper control over compliance with forestry legislation, regular monitoring and control over the state of forest resources, as well as the introduction of stricter sanctions for violations of forestry rules and increased liability for illegal logging and destruction of forests are highlighted. The importance of public involvement in the process of forest protection and the need for international cooperation in the field of forest protection were emphasized.

Keywords

Forest protection; Administrative and legal framework; Biodiversity, Environmental safety; European standards; Responsibility

Introduction

Forest protection is one of the key components of the country's environmental security and sustainable development. Forests perform important ecosystem, economic and social functions, ensuring the maintenance of biodiversity, climate regulation, soil protection from erosion, and serving as a source of resources for the national economy. At the same time, current challenges, including deforestation, illegal use of forest resources, fires and other anthropogenic and natural factors, require clear legal regulation and an effective administrative mechanism for the protection of forest ecosystems (Institute for Eastern European Studies, 2021; Miller and Ager, 2013; Matsala *et al*., 2024; Shumilo *et al*., 2024; Vasylyshyn, 2023). These problems have been compounded by the aggressive war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, whose military machine takes human lives, wipes out towns and villages in its path, and destroys forests and the entire ecosystem (Pereira *et al*., 2022).

In this context, the issue of forest protection is of particular relevance, requiring the improvement of legal mechanisms that ensure protection and sustainable management. Therefore, the purpose of our research is to analyze the administrative and legal framework for forest protection in Ukraine, identify existing problems in the legislative regulation of this area and develop recommendations for their elimination. We pay special attention to assessing the current legislation of Ukraine, its compliance with modern environmental challenges and standards, and identifying ways to integrate European practices into the national legal system. A review of the literature shows that there is considerable scientific interest in forest protection. In particular, studies by Ukrainian and foreign authors emphasize the importance of preserving forest ecosystems as the basis for environmental safety (Bredikhina and Zadykhaylo, 2022; Kovalenko *et al*., 2023; Skliar *et al*., 2024; Suietnov and Tulina, 2021; Zhu, Hashimoto and Cushman, 2023). Analyzing the environmental aspects of forest management, the authors emphasize the need to implement strict forest protection standards (Kapelista *et al*., 2024; Shennan-Farpón, Visconti, P. and Norris, 2021). When considering legal mechanisms for forest protection, researchers focus on gaps in current legislation and the need to adapt it to international standards (Dubovych *et al*., 2019; Liubchych *et al*., 2020; Nordberg, 2007; Sotirov *et al*., 2020.

Scientists also emphasize the importance of involving the public in the process of forest protection. For example, according to the research of Liubchych *et al.* (2020) and Karpova (2014), effective communication between government agencies, NGOs and local communities significantly increases the effectiveness of forest protection measures. In addition, the European experience shows us successful cases of integration of environmental standards into forest management practices in EU countries (European Commission, 2021; Kalapodis *et al*., 2024). In view of the above, the administrative and legal framework for forest protection in Ukraine is an important element of ensuring environmental safety and sustainable development of the country. Consequently, their improvement requires a comprehensive approach that includes an analysis of existing legislation, international experience, and the active participation of all stakeholders. This is the only way to ensure effective protection of forests and their sustainable use for future generations.

Methodology

This study employed a multi-method legal research strategy that integrated doctrinal, empirical, and comparative approaches to examine the administrative and legal framework for forest protection in Ukraine.

Doctrinal Analysis of Legal Sources: Primary attention was given to the analysis of Ukrainian legal acts regulating forest use and protection. This included the Constitution of Ukraine (1996)[1], the Forest Code of Ukraine (1994), the Law "On Environmental Protection" (1991), the Law "On the Plant World" (1999), the Law "On the Animal World" (2001), and other regulatory documents, strategies, and government programmes adopted up to 2024. Each text was examined to identify regulatory principles, institutional responsibilities, mechanisms of control, and provisions on liability for violations.

Empirical and Statistical Analysis: Quantitative data on the state and dynamics of Ukraine's forest fund from 1991 to 2024 were obtained from official reports of the State Agency of Forest Resources of Ukraine, the Forest Stewardship Council, and international organizations such as World Rainforests. These data were systematized into time-series tables and visualized through figures showing forest area growth, self-reforestation dynamics, and qualitative composition by tree species. Statistical interpretation focused on identifying long-term trends, natural versus anthropogenic drivers of forest change, and the implications for environmental governance.

Institutional and Administrative Review: The roles and responsibilities of key management entities, including the State Agency of Forest Resources of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture, local governments, and research institutions, were examined through legal documents and secondary literature. This made it possible to assess administrative coordination, overlaps, and enforcement capacity within the forestry sector.

Comparative Legal Analysis: To evaluate the adequacy of Ukraine's regulatory framework, a comparative study was carried out with European and international practices. This included an examination of the EU forest policy framework, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system, and the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). Indicators such as biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest management standards, and mechanisms of liability were compared to identify transferable practices for Ukrainian legislation.

Synthesis and Critical Evaluation: The findings from doctrinal, empirical, administrative, and comparative strands were integrated to identify systemic gaps in Ukraine's forest protection framework. Special emphasis was placed on enforcement mechanisms, liability provisions, and alignment with European environmental integration processes.

[1] The Constitution of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine of 28 June 1996, No. 254к/96-ВР. *Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*. 1996. № 30. Article 141.

Through this comprehensive methodology, the study ensures both theoretical depth and empirical validity in assessing the current state of Ukraine's forest protection system and in proposing directions for its improvement.

Results

Administrative and legal framework for regulating forest protection in Ukraine

Forest accounting in Ukraine is carried out, in particular, by calculating the area of territory covered by forest. All forests on the territory of Ukraine, regardless of the category of land on which they grow according to their main purpose and regardless of ownership rights, including forest plots, linear protective plantations with an area of at least 0.1 hectares, and other forest-covered lands, belong to the forest fund of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1994). Ukraine's forest fund plays an important role in the country's environmental and economic development. To comprehensively understand the dynamics of changes in Ukraine's forest fund over the past decades and to predict future trends in forestry, we analyzed the changes in the area of the Ukrainian forest fund from 1991 to 2024 (see Table 1) using data from the State Agency of Forest Resources of Ukraine (State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, 2024) and the international organization FSC (2025).

Table 1: Changes in the area of the forest fund of Ukraine

Year	*Area covered in Ukraine*
1991	9.6 million hectares approximately 15.6% of the country's total area
2000	10.2 million hectares about 17% of the country's total area
2010	10.4 million hectares about 18% of the country's total area
2020	10.7 million hectares about 19% of the country's total area
2024	10.8 million hectares about 20% of the country's total area

In the early 1990s, Ukraine's forestry fund totalled about 9.6 million hectares, which was approximately 15.6% of the country's territory. The quality of forests in Ukraine was uneven, which was due to a number of systemic factors. One of the key factors that negatively affected the state of the forest fund was the imperfection of the legislative framework regulating the protection, use, and reproduction of forest resources. At that time, the regulatory and legal acts relating to forestry were fragmented, outdated, or inconsistent with each other, which created legal uncertainty and complicated effective forest management.

In particular, the lack of clear mechanisms for controlling deforestation, insufficient regulatory support for reforestation procedures, and weak regulation of liability for violations of forestry legislation all contributed to the degradation of forest ecosystems. In addition, the legislation did not take into account the environmental aspects of forest management, which led to economic interests prevailing over environmental protection.

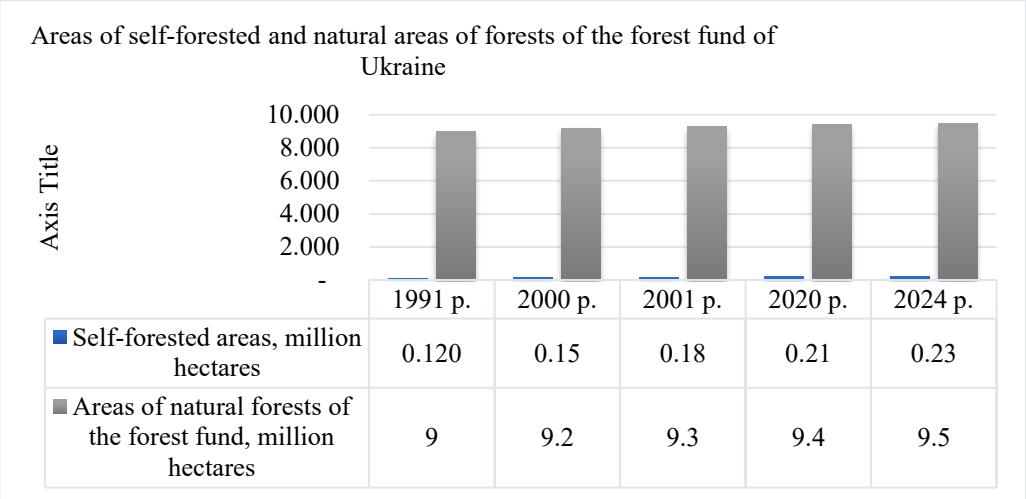
By 2000, the forest area had increased to 10.2 million hectares. During this period, reforestation programmes played a significant role in increasing the forest area, but problems with illegal logging and poaching remained. Statistics for 2010 show that the forest area grew to 10.4 million hectares. There have been some changes in forestry management. The introduction of new environmental programmes and reforestation projects has resulted in positive developments not only in the increase of the forest fund, but also in the quality of forest plantations. However, climate change and pests have begun to have a negative impact on forests. In 2020, Ukraine's forest fund increased to 10.7 million hectares (State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, 2024; World Rainforests, 2010). Despite adverse anthropogenic impacts, natural disasters, and ongoing military actions across the territory of our country, a positive trend in the expansion of forested areas has been successfully maintained. This growth is the result of natural processes, such as the increase in self-regenerating forest lands, as well as effective governance by the state.

It should be noted that two key factors influenced the expansion of the forest fund during the analyzed period. The first is the natural afforestation of territories, which, despite appearing to reflect positive ecological changes, in fact points to a negative economic situation in the country, particularly in the agricultural sector. A significant portion of arable land remained uncultivated between 1991 and the early 2000s, which led to a deterioration in the quality of these lands and subsequently required substantial investment for their restoration.

The second defining factor is the European orientation of Ukraine’s environmental policy, which has brought about changes in governance approaches and the implementation of effective programs aimed at restoring the forest fund. Thus, in 1991, the area of self-afforested areas was approximately 120,000 hectares, while the territory of natural forests covered about 9 million hectares. Over the following decades, there was a tendency to increase the area of self-forested territories, which, as noted above, was caused by the crisis in our country's economy. In 2000, the area of self-afforested areas grew to 150,000 hectares, while natural forests remained at 9.2 million hectares. By 2010, self-reforested areas already covered 180,000 hectares, while the area of natural forests increased slightly to 9.3 million hectares. By 2020, the area of self-afforested areas reached 210,000 hectares, indicating active forest regeneration processes. At that time, natural forests occupied about 9.4 million hectares, which also reflects the positive dynamics in the conservation and expansion of forest resources. The analytics of 2024 indicators indicate that the area of self-forested areas has increased to almost 230 thousand hectares, while natural forests remained at the level of 9.4-9.5 million hectares (State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, 2024; World Rainforests, 2010).

In general, as of 2024, the forested area of Ukraine is about 20% of the total area of our country, which is a significant indicator for ensuring environmental balance (Figure 1). The total area of the forest fund is 10.8 million hectares, of which 9.6 million hectares are covered with forest vegetation. This indicates a significant potential for forestry and biodiversity conservation. Ukraine's forests are represented by more than 30 species of trees, which creates a diversity of ecosystems and ensures the resilience of forests to climate change. The most widespread tree species is Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), which covers about 35% of the forested area. Common oak (*Quercus robur*) accounts for 28%,

European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) for 9%, spruce (*Picea abies*) for 7%, hanging birch (*Betula pendula*) for 6%, and black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) for 4% (State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, 2024).



	1991 p.	2000 p.	2001 p.	2020 p.	2024 p.
Self-forested areas, million hectares	0.120	0.15	0.18	0.21	0.23
Areas of natural forests of the forest fund, million hectares	9	9.2	9.3	9.4	9.5

Figure 1: Areas of self-forested and natural areas of forests of the forest fund of Ukraine

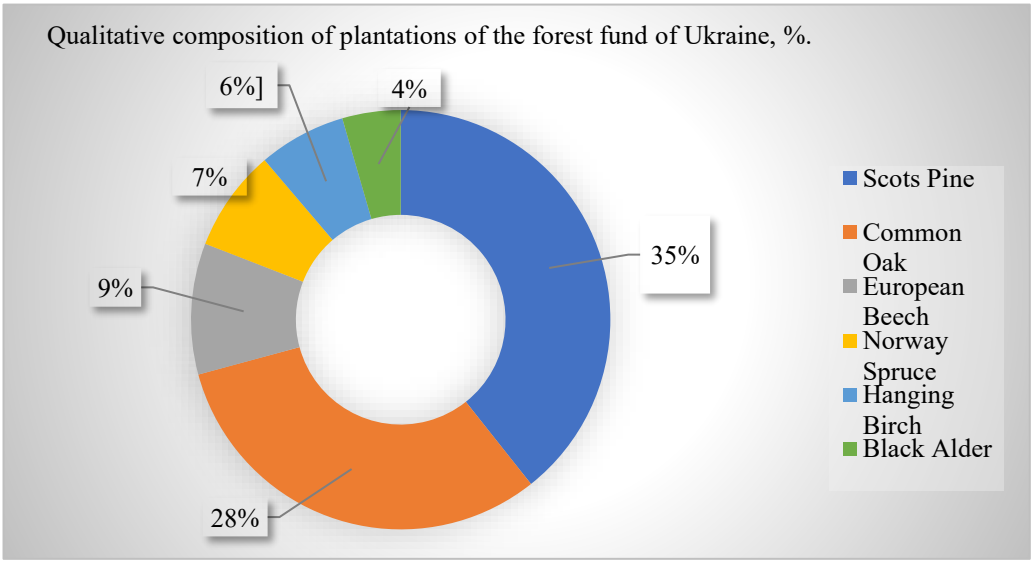


Figure 2: Qualitative composition of forest plantations in Ukraine in % by tree species.

These species are the main components of Ukrainian forests and are essential for their sustainability and productivity. The distribution of forests across Ukraine is uneven, due to geographical and climatic conditions and historical changes in land use (Figure 2). The most densely forested regions are the Ukrainian Carpathians and Polissya, where natural conditions favour the formation of dense forests. This creates the preconditions for the development of forestry and tourism in these regions. Ukrainian legislation on the protection and use of forest resources provides for a number of measures to preserve forests and their rational use. An important aspect is to ensure sustainable development,

including reforestation, protection against illegal logging, and the introduction of modern technologies in forestry (FSC, 2025).

In Ukraine, forest protection is regulated by a set of legal acts that define the principles of state policy in this area, the functions of executive authorities, and the rights and obligations of business entities and citizens. The main sources of legal regulation are the Constitution of Ukraine, the Forest Code of Ukraine, laws and regulations, as well as a number of international treaties ratified by Ukraine. An important role in ensuring the proper state of forests is played by administrative and legal means, which include licensing, control, supervision, administrative liability for violation of forest legislation, etc. The Constitution of Ukraine is the fundamental document that defines the legal framework for the functioning of the state, and among other important issues, it pays significant attention to environmental safety. At the highest legislative level, it is established that ensuring environmental safety and maintaining ecological balance on the territory of Ukraine is the responsibility of the state. This provision also covers overcoming the consequences of the Chornobyl disaster, a global catastrophe, as well as preserving the gene pool of the Ukrainian people (The Constitution of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine, 1996[2]).

At the same time, the Constitution of Ukraine enshrines the principle that the use of property should not worsen the environmental situation and natural qualities of the land. This provision points to the need for a responsible attitude to natural resources, emphasizing that economic activity should be carried out in accordance with environmental standards and norms. In addition, the Basic Law of the state stipulates that the principles of environmental safety are determined exclusively by the laws of Ukraine. This means that the legal framework should clearly regulate all aspects related to environmental protection and ecological balance. Laws should establish criteria and mechanisms for monitoring compliance with environmental standards, as well as provide for liability for their violation. Thus, the Constitution of Ukraine creates a legal framework for the formation of the state's environmental policy aimed at protecting the environment and ensuring sustainable development, including the protection of forests. This emphasizes the importance of integrating environmental principles into all spheres of public life to ensure a safe and healthy environment for present and future generations (The Constitution of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine, 1996).

In Ukraine, the legal framework for forest protection is regulated by a number of legislative acts, among which the Forest Code of Ukraine is the key one. It defines the basic principles of forest resource management, the rights and obligations of business entities in the field of forest use and protection, as well as the mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the law. Given that "Ukraine's forests are its national wealth" (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1994), the protection and sustainable use of forest resources is one of the key objectives of Ukraine's current environmental policy. After all, forests perform a significant ecological, economic, and social function, providing biodiversity, climate regulation, timber, and other resources. Equally important in forest protection is the Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Protection" of 25 June 1991 No.

[2] The Constitution of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine of 28 June 1996, No. 254к/96-ВР. *Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*. 1996. № 30. Article 141.

1264-XII[3], which sets out the basic principles of environmental protection in general. With regard to forest resources, this Law provides for the establishment of rent for their special use in accordance with the Tax Code of Ukraine (On Environmental Protection: Law of Ukraine, 1991).

In addition, according to this Law, forest resources and other vegetation are under state protection, which provides for their regulation and control over their use. According to the Law, these issues are regulated at the state level, in particular through the competence of the central executive body that implements the state policy in the field of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources. The tasks of this body include organizing state supervision over compliance with the requirements of the legislation on the protection, conservation, use, and reproduction of forests. The control is exercised over the activities of central and local executive authorities, local self-government bodies, as well as enterprises and institutions, regardless of ownership. This includes control over Ukrainian citizens, foreigners, stateless persons, and non-resident legal entities. The Law also provides for the use of environmental protection funds for maintaining the state cadastre of territories and objects of the nature reserve fund, forestry on state and municipal lands, and forest management. In addition, funds may be used to buy out privately owned land plots for forestry or to create territories and objects of the nature reserve fund. At the same time, control over the use and protection of forests is an important component of the state policy in the field of ecology, which ensures the preservation of natural resources for future generations. The legislative mechanisms for regulating this area are aimed at preventing violations of environmental legislation and ensuring sustainable development of the forestry sector in Ukraine (On flora: Law of Ukraine, 1999).

In this context, it is important to consider the provisions of the Forest Management Strategy of Ukraine until 2035, which defines the mission of sustainable forest management in light of ecological, economic, and social challenges (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2021). The strategy outlines the reform of the management system, digitalization of the sector, development of recreational infrastructure, modernization of the material and technical base, and training of specialists. Among its key goals are increasing the forest cover of Ukraine, enhancing the forests' capacity to absorb greenhouse gases, reducing the area of clear-cutting, and introducing transparent mechanisms for timber trade and combating illegal logging.

At the same time, the Law of Ukraine "On the Basic Principles (Strategy) of the State Environmental Policy until 2030" enshrines the principles of integrating environmental policy into all areas of public administration, including forestry (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020). The document emphasizes the need to improve the efficiency of natural resource management, preserve biodiversity, adapt to climate change, and promote environmental education. Particular attention is given to ensuring environmental security, especially through strengthening control over the use of forest resources, improving monitoring systems, and implementing environmentally oriented technologies. Direct relevance to the protection of the forest fund is also found in the provisions of the Laws

[3] On Environmental Protection: Law of Ukraine of 25 June 1991, No. 1264-XII. *Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*. 1991. № 41. Art. 546.

of Ukraine "On the Plant World" dated 9 April 1999, No. 591-XIV[4] and "On the Animal World" dated 13 December 2001, No. 2894-III[5].

In the current context of administrative and legal regulation of forest protection in Ukraine, it is essential to consider the Strategy for Environmental Security[6] and Climate Change Adaptation until 2030, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on 20 October 2021 (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2021). This regulatory document identifies among the key environmental and natural resource challenges the insufficient forest cover of Ukraine, which negatively affects public health and ecosystem resilience. The strategy notes that the economic and ecological condition of Ukrainian forests is unsatisfactory, and the material base of the forestry sector requires substantial modernization. In many regions of Ukraine, there is an increasing share of weakened and dying forests, especially secondary spruce stands in the Carpathians. There is an urgent need to enhance the adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems to climate change and anthropogenic pressure. In view of this, forests require intensified care and the implementation of measures based on ecologically oriented forestry practices that are close to natural conditions.

Thus, forest protection is one of the key components of the country's environmental security, which is crucial for biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, and sustainable development of society. Ukraine, as a country with a vast forest fund, faces numerous challenges in the effective management and protection of its forests. In this context, administrative and legal frameworks play an important role in shaping the forestry management system, ensuring compliance with legislation and counteracting illegal actions that threaten forest ecosystems. The implementation of the Strategy's measures is vital for the sustainable development of Ukraine's forestry sector amid climate change. The forest plays a crucial role in the natural environment, performing essential functions for ecological balance. In this context, it is worth agreeing with Barchuk (2021), who believes that understanding the essence and significance of the forest is impossible without taking into account its environmental, legal, economic, and social aspects. Each of these aspects can be characterized as follows:

1. *Environmental and legal aspect.* Forest ecosystems are complex natural structures that provide biodiversity, regulate climate conditions, and protect soil from erosion. Therefore, legal regulation of forest resources aims to preserve these ecosystems by establishing rules for the use, protection, and restoration of forests. Environmental and legal regulations are aimed at ensuring sustainable forestry development, including the prevention of deforestation and illegal use of forest resources.
2. *Economic aspect.* Forests are an important economic resource, providing raw materials for various industries, such as woodworking, paper, and

[4] On flora: Law of Ukraine of 9 April 1999, No. 591-XIV. *Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*. 1999. № 22-23. Article 198.

[5] On fauna: Law of Ukraine of 13 December 2001 No. 2894-III. *Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*. 2002. № 14. Article 97.

[6] On approval of the Strategy for Environmental Security and Adaptation to Climate Change for the period up to 2030: Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 20 October 2021 No. 1363-r. Available online at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1363-2021-%D1%80#Text.

pharmaceuticals. The economic value of the forest also lies in its ability to support recreational tourism and provide ecosystem services such as air and water purification. Proper management of forest resources can ensure the sustainable economic development of regions with significant forest cover.

3. *Social aspect.* Forests perform an important social function, meeting the cultural and recreational needs of society. Forest areas are often used for recreation, sports, and education, providing opportunities for physical and mental recovery. The social value of the forest is also reflected in its role in supporting traditional lifestyles and cultural practices of local communities.

Zaveriukha (2018) examines forest use and protection within the framework of existing legislation and doctrines of land and forest law. The author highlights the necessity of effective control from both the state and public sectors. Thus, the legal framework for regulating forest protection is an integral part of the environmental law system and plays an important role in ensuring the sustainable development of society. They contribute to the preservation of natural resources for future generations and form the basis for the development of an environmentally oriented state policy. The study and improvement of legal mechanisms in this area is an urgent task for scientists, lawyers, and all stakeholders.

Forestry management in the system of administrative, legal, and economic mechanisms of forest resources protection

Considering that forest protection is one of the key components of a country's environmental security, playing a crucial role in preserving biodiversity, regulating the climate, and ensuring sustainable societal development, Ukraine, as a country with a large forest fund, faces numerous challenges in the effective management and protection of its forests. In this context, administrative and legal frameworks play an important role in shaping the forest management system, ensuring compliance with legislation and counteracting illegal actions that threaten forest ecosystems. Establishing a clear forest management system that provides for the division of powers between central and local authorities is one of the key aspects of the administrative and legal framework (Table 2). This contributes to effective control over compliance with forestry legislation and ensures proper coordination of the activities of various actors.

Table 2: Management entities in the forestry sector of Ukraine

State Agency of Forest Resources of Ukraine	• developing and implementing state forestry development programs;
	• monitoring compliance with legislation;
	• conducting scientific research, etc.
Ministry of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture of Ukraine	• implementation of regulatory and legal regulations in the field of environmental protection, including forest resources;
	•development of strategies for biodiversity conservation and adaptation to climate change, etc.
Local government bodies	•management of forest resources within the territory of the relevant administrative unit;
	•control over their use;

	•organization of measures for afforestation and forest conservation, etc.
Research institutions	•Providing scientific justification for decisions in the field of forestry;
	•Developing innovative forest management methods;
	•Conducting environmental monitoring, etc.

Borovyk and Barchuk (2022) argue that the administrative and legal protection of Ukraine's forest fund is a fundamental aspect of effective public administration in forestry. The study emphasizes that the forest fund of Ukraine is subject to administrative and legal protection and is the object of activity of public administration entities responsible for the preservation of its components (Borovyk and Barchuk, 2022). An important role in the implementation of forest protection measures is played by state authorities (Figure 3) that supervise and control the use and restoration of forest resources.

State Agency of Forest Resources of Ukraine
Regional forestry and hunting administrations
National parks and nature reserves
Environmental Inspection of Ukraine

Figure 3: State authorities that supervise and control the use and restoration of forest resources

Monitoring of forests, their restoration after damage, and the rational use of the forest fund play a significant role in ensuring forest protection. In addition, an essential component is the system of liability for violations of forest protection legislation, which includes administrative sanctions and enforcement measures. A comprehensive list of forest law violations is provided in Article 98 of the Forest Code of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1994). In particular, administrative liability is established for offenses described in table 3.

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Table 3: Types of offences under forestry legislation for which administrative liability is provided

✓	Legal use of the state forest fund's land.
✓	Violation of the established procedure for the use of the forestry fund, harvesting and export of timber, and harvesting of oleoresin.
✓	Illegal felling, damage, and destruction of forest crops and young trees.
✓	Destruction or damage to shelterbelt forest plantations.
✓	Destruction or damage to the undergrowth in the forest.
✓	Carrying out forest use not in accordance with the purpose or requirements stipulated in the felling ticket (order) or forest ticket.
✓	Violation of the rules for forest restoration and improvement, and use of mature wood resources.
✓	Damage to hayfields and pastures on the lands of the state forest fund.
✓	Unauthorised haymaking and grazing, unauthorised gathering of wild fruits, nuts, mushrooms, berries.
✓	Commissioning of production facilities without equipment that prevents harmful impacts on forests.
✓	Damage to the forest by wastewater, chemicals, oil and oil products, harmful emissions, and waste.
✓	Forest pollution with waste.
✓	Destruction or damage to forest drainage ditches, drainage systems, and roads on the lands of the state forest fund.
✓	Destruction or damage to forest boundary markers.
✓	Destruction of fauna useful for the forest.
✓	Violation of fire safety requirements in forests.

However, as rightly noted in the reviewer's comments, the mere existence of a list of violations in the Forest Code is not sufficient grounds for imposing liability. The relevant sanctions are codified in the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of Ukraine. Specifically, administrative liability for illegal logging, damage, and destruction of forest plantations and young growth is provided under Article 65 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses. Sanctions include fines for individuals and officials, which vary depending on the recurrence of the offense (Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses, 1984, Art. 65).

Criminal liability for illegal logging or unlawful transportation, storage, or sale of timber is established under Article 246 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. In cases of significant harm or repeated offenses, penalties include restriction or deprivation of liberty for up to seven years (Criminal Code of Ukraine, 2001, Art. 246). Thus, effective forest protection requires not only the normative definition of violations but also a clear mechanism for imposing liability through administrative and criminal sanctions, ensured by the interaction between the Forest Code, the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses, and the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

European experience of forest legislation development in the context of integration processes

Ensuring a balance between economic interests and environmental requirements in the field of forest protection is an important task of modern legislation. National legal systems strive to develop comprehensive approaches that consider the specifics of local conditions, traditional use of forest resources, and international environmental obligations. In this context, international agreements and conventions play a key role by establishing common principles and standards for forest protection at the global level. In this context, forest managers should pay special attention should be paid to the activities of the Forest Stewardship Council A.C. (FSC, 2025), which was established in 1993 as a result of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, 1992). FSC's mission is to promote environmentally sound, socially beneficial, and economically viable forest management worldwide. It is important to note that FSC is an international organization that offers a system of voluntary accreditation and independent third-party certification.

The system allows certificate holders to market their products and services as having been produced in an environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, and economically viable manner. FSC sets standards for the development and approval of forest management system standards based on FSC principles and criteria. In addition, FSC sets standards for the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies, also known as certification bodies, that certify conformity to FSC standards. Based on these standards, FSC provides a certification system for organizations seeking to promote their products as certified to FSC standards. This helps to increase consumer confidence in such products and services, as well as stimulates the development of environmentally responsible forestry businesses. Thus, FSC's activities are an important element of the global forest protection system that promotes sustainable development and conservation of natural resources for future generations (FSC, 2025).

In the context of the European direction of Ukraine's development, Volkov's (2019) views on the need to take into account the positive experience of European countries in the field of forestry legislation are quite reasonable. The study emphasizes the importance of minimizing environmental harm, aligning national policies with sustainable development goals and international legal standards, and enhancing both state and public initiatives for the rational use, conservation, and development of forest resources to maintain ecological balance. Obviously, such opinions are correct because in modern conditions, the issue of integrating environmental requirements into the administrative and legal framework for forest protection is particularly relevant. This involves taking into account international standards and recommendations, as well as developing cooperation with international organisations in the field of environmental protection.

Forest biodiversity is a key aspect of maintaining ecological sustainability and natural balance. In this context, the findings of Petrova and Petrov (2008) are an important contribution to the understanding of international standards for biodiversity assessment. They focus on the role of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), which is one of the most important international forums dedicated to forestry issues. Scientists believe that the MCPFE brings together heads of state, forestry

authorities from European countries, and representatives of international non-governmental organizations. This allows for the development of common approaches to the conservation of forest ecosystems, discussion of current issues, and finding effective solutions. As part of the MCPFE process, the criterion "Conservation and restoration of biodiversity of forest ecosystems" was proposed, which includes a number of indicators. Among them are: tree species composition, regeneration, naturalness, introduced tree species, deadwood and deadfall, genetic resources, landscape mosaic, protected species, protected forests, etc. (Petrova and Petrov, 2008). These indicators allow assessing the state of biodiversity and identifying the necessary measures to maintain and restore it. In particular, the composition of tree species is an important indicator of the ecological stability of forests, and regeneration allows us to assess the ability of ecosystems to regenerate themselves. Naturalness, as an indicator, characterizes the degree of preservation of natural processes and forest structure, which is critical for maintaining biodiversity. Introduced tree species can affect the ecological balance, so their control is necessary to prevent negative consequences. Deadwood and breakage are indicators of the health of forest ecosystems, and genetic resources provide the adaptive potential of species. The landscape mosaic helps maintain species diversity and ecosystem processes. Protected species and forests are important elements of the biodiversity conservation strategy, ensuring protection of the most vulnerable components of ecosystems. Therefore, MCPFE plays a key role in shaping forest biodiversity policy in Europe. Its activities contribute to the development of effective strategies and practices that can be applied at national and international levels to ensure the sustainable development of forest ecosystems.

Conclusion

Summing up the above, we can state that scientific approaches to the use and protection of forests indicate the multidimensionality of the issues of their legal regulation. It is particularly important to emphasize the need to improve the system of administrative responsibility and monitoring, the organizational structure of management, and the strengthening of state and public control. Solving forest protection problems requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the recommendations of scientists who study this topic. This includes improving legislation, reforming governance bodies, introducing digital monitoring technologies, creating economic incentives for environmentally responsible management, and intensifying international cooperation. This is the only way to ensure effective protection of Ukraine's forest resources for future generations.

The study of the administrative and legal framework for forest protection in Ukraine revealed a number of key aspects that determine the effectiveness of legal regulation in this area. Given the importance of forests as an important environmental resource and their role in ensuring the environmental safety of the state, the issue of forest protection is of particular importance. Firstly, it should be noted that the current legislation on forest protection in Ukraine is comprehensive and covers various aspects, including environmental, economic, and social. The main legal act regulating forest protection is the Forest Code of Ukraine, which establishes the legal framework for the management, use, and restoration of forest resources. However, there is a need to improve the legislation in order to increase its effectiveness and adapt it to modern challenges. The main problems are the lack of clarity of legal norms, the absence of effective mechanisms

to monitor compliance with legal requirements, and the weak integration of environmental standards into forest management practices. Secondly, it is important to ensure proper control over compliance with forest legislation. Administrative authorities with the relevant powers should regularly monitor and control the state of forest resources. This includes checking compliance with regulations on deforestation, the use of forest land, and measures to restore forests. At the same time, there is a need to improve the regulatory framework by developing new legislation that would take into account current challenges and needs in the field of forest protection, in particular, introducing stricter sanctions for violations of forest use rules, as well as increasing liability for illegal logging and destruction of forests. Third, one of the key factors for successful regulation is cooperation between government agencies and the public. Involving the public in the forest protection process can help to raise public awareness of the importance of conserving forest resources and encourage active participation in forest protection measures. Fourthly, it is worth paying attention to the need for international cooperation in forest protection. Given the global nature of environmental problems, Ukraine should actively cooperate with international organizations and neighbouring countries to address common challenges and share experiences.

Therefore, the administrative and legal framework for forest protection in Ukraine requires further development and improvement. This includes both reforming the legislation in line with current trends and strengthening control over its observance. Active public involvement in the forest protection process and international cooperation in solving environmental problems are also important. Only a comprehensive approach will ensure effective forest protection and sustainable forestry development in Ukraine.

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Authors' Declarations and Essential Ethical Compliances

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Contribution	*Author 1*	*Author 2*	*Author 3*	*Author 4*	*Author 5*
Conceived and designed the research or analysis	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Collected the data	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contributed to data analysis & interpretation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Wrote the article/paper	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
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